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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of adult education from a philosophical viewpoint. Topics covered include the concept and academic discipline of adult education, theoretical attempts to delineate the academic discipline of adult education, university study of adult education, and a comparison of plans and reality in the field of adult education. The paper concludes that adult education is the designation of any educational activity with which earlier educational activities are continued, thus including literacy programs and similar work in developing parts of the world with adults who have had no formal schooling, but have profited from other types of education. Adult education as almost universally understood today is concerned with liberal arts, languages, science, technology, and occupational subjects. Various methods and media are applied to adult education, among them primarily those of group learning and distance education. These activities are being investigated at many universities within the framework of the academic discipline of adult education. University curricula for adult education have become common. Their core is adult learning, and their target subjects include the life conditions of adult students, analysis of educational and training needs, counseling, curricular studies, and methodologies. A 59-item reference list concludes the document. (KC)

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FernUniversität
Gesamthochschule

ZIFF PAPIERE 52

BÖRJE HOLMBERG

ON THE CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE OF ADULT EDUCATION

ADULT LEARNING

THE TARGET GROUPS OF ADULT EDUCATION

INCLUDING

THE LIFE CONDITIONS OF ADULT STUDENTS

ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING NEEDS

COUNSELLING

CURRICULAR STUDIES

METHODOLOGY

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Hagen, September 1984

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Der vorliegende Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit in der Literatur vorkommenden theoretischen Überlegungen zum Inhalt der Disziplin Erwachsenenbildung und mit empirischen Untersuchungen der mit der Einrichtung einer solchen Disziplin verbundenen Erwartungen sowie mit praktischen Anwendungen in der Form von Studienangeboten und Forschungstätigkeiten einiger Universitäten in Europa, Nordamerika und Afrika. Auf dieser Grundlage wird der Begriff Adult Education im Sinne von Erwachsenenbildung/ Weiterbildung kurz analysiert.

Erwachsenenbildung, so wie sie heute nahezu überall aufgefaßt wird, bezeichnet Weiterbildung von Erwachsenen, die nach ihrer Schulzeit berufstätig gewesen sind, und umfaßt Fächer aller Art, z.B. Geisteswissenschaften, Sprachen, Naturwissenschaft, Technologie und berufsbildende Fächer. Man wendet in der Erwachsenenbildung verschiedene Methoden und Medien an, wobei Gruppenarbeit und Fernstudium einen besonderen Stellenwert haben.

Die Erwachsenenbildung als Disziplin stützt sich stark auf angrenzende Disziplinen, wie andere Gebiete der pädagogischen Forschung, Psychologie, Soziologie und Wirtschaftswissenschaften. Im Zentrum stehen das Lernen Erwachsener, die Zielgruppen der Erwachsenenbildung (die Lebenswelt erwachsener Lerner eingeschlossen), die Analyse von Bildungs- und Ausbildungsbedarf, Beratung, Curriculumstudien und Methodologie.

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ON THE CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE OF ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education is usually taken to denote continuing education of grown-up people who, after initial school education, are or have been active in an occupation (cf. Fredriksson & Gestrelius 1975, Liveright & Ohliger 1970 p. 47). This seems to be an accurate description of adult education in the Western world.

Adult students in this sense are thus people with experience both of at least some formal education and of either gainful occupation or work as housewives, or both of these. This means that they are characterised by some maturity. Usually their educational activities are undertaken voluntarily and they are often assumed to be largely independent in their learning (cf. Holmberg 1984).

This description leaves several questions unanswered. Does post-graduate study by doctors, economists, scientists and other academically highly qualified people belong to adult education? What about the latter part of a university-degree programme interrupted by a period of practical work? Can literacy education of adults who have never been to school be excluded from the adult-education concept? The former two can undoubtedly be labelled 'continuing education' (closely related to the German concept of Weiterbildung), whereas the designation might be considered a misnomer for the last-mentioned category, which, however, is unquestionably a most important concern of adult education. It is thus unrealistic, universally to insist on previous experience of formal education as a prerequisite for learning projects undertaken to be included in what is called adult education.

One natural reaction to questions like these is, of course: What does it matter? The label is little interesting. It is the educational work that matters. There is, nevertheless, at least

one reason to look into the concept of adult education, and that is the emergence of the academic discipline of adult education. A discipline as a branch of university study and research has to cover an area delineated in some way.

Attempts theoretically to delineate the academic discipline of adult education

A search for the objectives - and consequently - the content of university training programmes for adult educators can be made by means of general theoretical considerations as well as on the basis of analyses of the needs of adult educators.

General considerations

Jensen, Liveright & Hallenbeck, while admitting that the discipline of adult education was not much beyond the outline stage, in 1964 described it as being advanced

> 'through the borrowing and adapting of knowledge, theory, and research technology from many other disciplines.
> From individual and social psychology basic knowledge about the processes of learning and change in individuals, groups, and communities has been selected. Philosophy has been used to gain an understanding of the ethics and rationale of the field of adult education and suggests some of its content, processes, and objectives. From sociology has come specific knowledge about human social organization as it influences and relates to adult learning, as well as insight into the essential functions of adult education in the maintenance and development of society. History has provided a perspective of man's relationship to himself and to society, along with a broader understanding of the endless human quest for knowledge. Anthropology has contributed experience relating to the introduction and acceptance or rejection of change in ideas and technology. Economics has provided information about the relationship between human competence and societal well-being, as well as principles for the sound use of resources for lifelong learning.
> Not all pertinent material from these disciplines is necessarily appropriate. They have not been able to answer all the questions that arise. Adult education develops its own research to test the applicability of existing knowledge to the education of adults, and to discover for itself new knowledge or new relationships within existing knowledge. Thus, while adult education is dependent upon other bodies of knowledge, it is original in that it develops special knowledge about the unique characteristic of adults as learners. Through its research, adult education is steadily broadening the concept of lifelong learning to replace the obsolete concepts that resulted in educational programs being terminal.'
>
> (Jensen, Liveright & Hallenbeck 1964 p. VIII)

The backgrounds of adult educators vary very much both as far as academic fields of study and professional experiences are concerned. In the same way students' backgrounds, needs and wishes vary, which makes for a certain amount of idiosyncracy. Liveright 1964 suggests some 'tentative conclusions' summarising 'implications about graduate education for adult educators' (p. 99) like this:

1. Because of the very broad and varied tasks, backgrounds, prior education, and experience of practitioners in the field, a graduate program should be quite flexible so that it may be geared to the needs of the individual entering the graduate program, taking cognizance of the prior education and experience of the students.
2. Effective systems should be developed for evaluating the extent to which such prior experiences and education have already achieved the aims and objectives, in order that such graduate programs can be geared to the special needs and educational gaps of the individual student.
3. In the light of this need for flexibility, major emphasis should be placed upon a sound and intensive program of counseling for each student. This obligation for counseling should fall primarily on the professor of adult education.
4. Because of the nature of the field of adult education and the emerging nature of the profession, much of the content of a graduate program must at this time be based upon and borrowed from other disciplines. This will highlight the counseling responsibility of the professor of adult education in terms of guiding his students to appropriate programs and courses in other divisions and departments in the university.
5. A sound and comprehensive program of adult education which will achieve the objectives outlined should include some work in the fields of history, psychology, social psychology, sociology, economics, political science, philosophy, and administration.
6. In addition to courses or seminars in the areas outlined above, sound graduate programs of adult education should increasingly include special courses and seminars concerned with the philosophy, values, and ethics of adult education; with its techniques and methods; with its history and social background. The place of adult education in the community, the adult education learning situation, and research methods in adult education, should all be thoroughly understood.
7. In view of the variety of tasks and responsibilities of practitioners in the field of adult education and the fact that most students for some time to come will be recruited from persons already working in the field, a graduate program is likely to emphasize content and subject matter which concerns itself primarily with broad knowledge and understanding and the development of a sound philosophy and code of ethics rather than with specific skills and a high degree of specialization related to only one task, one kind of agency, or one specific job in a particular agency.

> A last word about the implications of adult education as an emerging profession is in order: On the one hand, the adolescent state of the field is responsible for certain doubts, feelings of inferiority, periods of inadequacy, and compensatory periods of aggressiveness. On the other, the concommitant fluidity places persons now in the field in an especially fortunate and challenging position. Patterns are still open and not rigid; future directions are being explored.
>
> (Liveright 1964 pp. 100 - 101)

More or less in the same spirit Douglah & Moss 1969 require of those 'who will perform the role of adult education scholars' a 'high quality doctorate in adult education', which 'should have breadth (i.e., include other disciplines)', but must also 'be characterized by depth in the unique area of the field of adult education itself'. Further, 'considerable competency in research methodology' and 'learning experiences related to theory development' are required (Douglah & Moss 1969 pp. 131 - 132).

In a survey of the adult-education literature of the 1970s Carol Hoare states:

> In addition to a solid grounding in theory, one key element emerges from the literature as a requisite quality for adult education specialists. It is the ability to operate in changed role relationships with the learner. Marien .... finds much of the latter incorporated in the concept of 'modeling', a role in which the educationist functions as a senior learner and allows his behavior to guide the student (Hoare 1982 p. 63).

Among future issues Hoare in the same context further refers to 'different learner-to-facilitator relationships as brokers, counselors and knowledge-linkers'.

Distance-education methods are widely used and are being propagated in various kinds of adult education (Holmberg 1981, Young, Perraton, Jenkins & Dodds 1980).

Empirical studies of competencies to be required

As early as 1960 Martin Chamberlain, for a Chicago dissertation, made a questionnaire study of the attitudes of some one hundred leaders of adult education in the USA (reported on in

Chamberlain 1961 and Liveright 1964). Liveright summarises this research like this: Chamberlain

> 'asked some 135 [1] adult educators (including professors, deans, students, observers, and others in the field) to rate, in order of their importance, forty-five different competencies which were felt by the respondent to be important to adult educators. For this rating he described the prototype professional adult educator as one of the following:
>
> A full-time administrator of a program of adult education, for example an evening college dean or assistant, the educational director of a labor union, the director of adult education of a public school, the training director of an industrial organization, the head of an adult education department of a library, the senior staff member of a cooperative extension division. The administrator may also be a teacher or act as a consultant, but we are primarily interested in his role as an administrator.
>
> Chamberlain discovered - as might be expected in a profession in transition - that wide variances appeared in high-ranking competencies, both within the entire group of respondents and between various groups of respondents, such as the professors, the deans, and the other subgroups. Utilizing the total mean scores derived from all of the ratings, he identified the following as the top ten competencies:
>
> 1. A belief that most people have potentiality for growth.
> 2. Imagination in program development.
> 3. Ability to communicate effectively in both speaking and writing.
> 4. Understanding of the conditions under which adults are most likely to learn.
> 5. Ability to keep on learning.
> 6. Effectiveness as a group leader.
> 7. Knowledge of his own values, strengths, and weaknesses.
> 8. Open-mindedness - i.e., willingness to accept others' ideas.
> 9. Understanding of what motivates adults to participate in programs.
> 10. Strong commitment to adult education.
>
> *Thus, although there are a number of disagreements and variations among adult educators as to what constitutes the competencies required of a professional adult educator, it is possible to identify a cluster of competencies which are felt by a majority of experts in the field to be important.*
>
> .....
>
> Mr. Chamberlain himself lists the objectives for a graduate program of education which stem from his list of the top fifteen high-rated competencies. In his view a graduate program of adult education should aim at developing practitioners who meet the following qualifications:
>
> 1. *They must believe in the potentiality for growth of most people*, have strong commitments to adult education, and practice this by continual personal learning projects. They must have open minds and be willing to accept others' ideas. They must believe in

1 Chamberlain's own figure is 125 with 90 'usable responses' (Chamberlain 1961 p. 80)

> freedom of thought an expression and have a dynamic, rather than a static, concept of the field of adult education.
> 2. *They must possess certain skills,* especially the ability to write and speak well, to lead groups effectively, to organize and direct complex administrative activities, and to provide imagination in the development of programs.
> 3. *They must understand the conditions* under which adults learn, and the motivations which bring them to programs. They must also know their community, its structure and organization, and know themselves, including their strengths and weaknesses and personal philosophies.
>
> (Liveright 1964 pp. 91 - 92)

A more recent Delphi study of the competencies to be required of adult education was conducted by Bunning and reported on in a so far unpublished Arizona State University dissertation (Bunning 1976). Bunning is concerned with on the one hand skills, on the other hand what he calls knowledges. His findings indicate that the

> 'skills rated most highly were: Skills in continuous self-improvement, skills in diagnosing educational needs of individuals, skills in encouraging creativity, skills in communications, and skills that make one competent as an instructor. The "knowledges" that received the highest ratings were: Knowledge of himself (herself), knowledge of the needs and of the evolving nature of the adult, knowledge of the principles of adult education, knowledge of the process of change, and knowledge of the practical application of learning theories.'
>
> (Hoare 1982 p. 63)

The desired picture of the discipline

The principles advocated in the theoretical considerations referred to and the outcome of the studies of competencies to be required give us reason to describe the desired characteristics of the discipline of adult education like this:

1 Affective study objectives play an important part; openmindedness, commitment, understanding, emphaty, flexibility, belong to these. Chamberlain's statements of competency even repeatedly refer to belief in principles favouring adult education.[1]

---

1 Apart from the very highest rating (belief in potentiality for growth) belief occurs eight more times, for instance in rating 14 (belief in the necessity of innovation and experiment), 15 (belief in freedom of thought and expression), 20 (belief in educator's duty to learn throughout life), 21 (belief in participative decision-making in adult education), 24 (belief in a responsive and responsible citizenry), 37 (belief in 'the effectiveness of group energy and group action') (Chamberlain 1961 pp. 81 - 82).

2 Borrowings from other disciplines like philosophy, psychology, sociology and administration are considered necessary.

3 Research methodology is stressed, naturally a condition for scholarly study.

4 Educational needs diagnosis, target-group knowledge, learning theory, adult-education methodology, knowledge of media are seen as core subjects.

5 Communication skills belong to the discipline, with particular emphasis on the facilitator and counsellor roles of adult educators. Group study is encouraged; distance education with or without supplementary face-to-face sessions is frequently applied and seems to be given increasing recognition.

Against this background of desiderata it may be of interest to look into the actual creation of a discipline of adult education as realised in existing degree programmes.

Actual university study of adult education

It may be practical to discuss the two main tasks of a university in any discipline, research and teaching, separately.

Research into adult education

Much research relevant to adult education has been done in departments of education and psychology without any special commitment to adult education. Adult learning as a research area of its own is being analyzed in depths in departments of adult education. This research relies heavily on other educational research and studies of adjacent subjects, however.

As early as 1964 Jensen, Liveright & Hallenbeck (p. VIII) declared that adult education develops its own research to test the applicability of existing knowledge

> [in "individual and social psychology", "philosophy", "sociology", "history", "anthropology," "economics"]

to the education of adults, and to discover for itself new knowledge or new relationships within existing knowledge'. Cf. extract above on p. 2.

Areas of adult-education research within which much work has been done are for example

- o motivation (Burgess 1971, Houle 1961, Kuhlen 1970, Flinck 1977, etc.)
- o participation in adult education (Cross 1979, McIntosh, Calder & Swift 1976, Rockhill 1982, etc.)
- o learner characteristics, e.g. related to student autonomy and dependence (Tough 1978, McDonald & Knights 1979, Holmberg 1984, etc.)
- o learning and aging (Giles & Allman 1982, Löwe 1974, etc.)
- o methodology (Beder & Darkenwald 1982, Kidd 1973, Morgan, Holmes & Bundy 1976, Holmberg 1981, etc.)
- o media (Bates 1982, Campeau 1973, Evans & Leedham 1973, Ghatala & Wedemeyer 1973, etc.)
- o course and systems evaluation (Bartels & Wurster 1979, Gooler 1977b, Lewis 1974, etc.)
- o counselling (R. Lewis 1980, Sewart 1978, Simpson 1977, Thornton & McD. Mitchell 1978, etc.)
- o philosophy of adult education (Boyd & Apps 1980, Harrington 1977, Wedemeyer 1981, etc.)

While adult education is thus a research discipline with much recent activity it is probably correct to say that, as it is still in its infancy, it has not yet found its lasting scope and methodology.

Adult education as a university teaching subject

Adult education occurs as a subject area for study at a great many universities in various parts of the world. A few examples, chosen more or less at random, will illustrate the views held about adult education as a subject for university study.

In the Netherlands adult education called 'andragologie', seems to be firmly established as an academic discipline. The

University of Groningen lists as subjects for a basic degree:

- General andragology
- Andragology with reference to individuals
  " " " " groups
  " " " " organisations
  " " " " macro systems
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Philosophy (epistemology)
- Methodology
- Statistics
- Project based on practical work (orientation, data collection etc.)

These subjects occur in a number of other curricula as well. The University of Utrecht adds economics and The University of Amsterdam lists examples of themes for special study, such as ethnical minorities, youth unemployment, women's situation, and, in a doctoral programme, psycho-therapeutic concepts, communication and systems theories, etc.[1]

The United Kingdom has a strong tradition of adult education as a field of academic study. The British degrees for adult educators are important also as exerting, through their African and Asian graduates, a strong influence on corresponding studies in developing countries.

The M.A. degree in adult education at the University of Hull comprises

> 'one compulsory background course entitled Studies in Adult and Post-Secondary Education plus one main option in Theory and Method of Adult and Post-Secondary Education or Organisation and Management of Adult and Post-Secondary Education or Policy Studies in Adult and Post-Secondary Education.
>
> In addition, students prepare a dissertation of not more than 20,000 words on a topic related to one of the above courses. A two-term course on Research Methods is also compulsory but non-examined. Overseas students are required to take a one-term course entitled Education and Development' (Qualifications p. 9).

1 Information culled from prospectuses kindly provided by Drs. A. Kinderman, Rijksuniversiteit, Groningen.

What is called 'Studies in adult and post-secondary education' includes an

> 'analysis of the fundamental issues, both past and present, of post-school education. It covers the evolution of adult, further and higher education in the United Kingdom and examines some philosophical and sociological aspects of post-school education in general' (Qualifications p. 9).

This is to be compared with the offer of the West German Fern-Universität. A FernUniversität course on adult (continuing) education (Weiterbildung) prepares post-graduate students for two written and two oral examinations. The former comprise a theme to be chosen out of each of two of the following theme groups.

Group 1: Theory of adult education, History of adult education, Methods of adult education.

Group 2: Target-group problems, particularly as applied to a special target group, The didactics of a subject included in degree passed.

Group 3: Occupational adult education, Political adult education, Post-graduate adult education, Counselling in adult education.

Group 4: an optional subject within a field of study selected by the student.

The oral examinations are concerned with two of the following four subject areas:

1. The conditions of learning and the education process of adults
2. Curricula and didactics of adult education
3. Institutions and forms of organisation for adult education
4. Social and legal bases of adult education and its bases in educational policy.

The course units developed (for distance education) analyse theoretical and practical approaches to adult education, among them learning theory, international aspects, the didactics of special subjects, methods and media, and also pay considerable attention to adult education as a profession. Project work and reports on practical adult-education activities are also foreseen in this course programme (Amtliche Mitteilungen 1983:4).

A further European programme should be mentioned, a (printed) basic, elementary course on adult education offered by Växjö University College in Sweden. It focuses its presentation on three main areas, i.e. the role of adult education in society, the situation of the adult student and methodological problems, thus a very succinct curriculum description.

Adult education as an academic discipline seems to be a common occurrence particularly in North America. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto is an outstanding example. In a brochure (of 1983) describing its graduate programmes in adult education it is said in an overview that the objects of study are 'the facilitation of adult learning, the counselling of adult learners, the political concerns of providing learning resources for adults, and international and comparative adult education'.

An important statement about the overriding principles governing the work is this: 'Each student's program is unique and may be focused on topics of interest where sufficient faculty expertise exists.' This would seem to meet the requirements for flexibility in graduate programmes voiced by, among others, Liveright as quoted above. Four 'areas of concentration' are described as follows

> 'Adult Education and Counselling
>
> In conjunction with the Department of Applied Psychology, the M.Ed. degree in Adult Education and Counsellung is offered for those interested in the application of counselling theory to adult concerns.
>
> Community Development
>
> The Community Development focus is primarily for practitioners responsible for programs in community settings where learning is an essential component of developmental programs designed to further community goals.
>
> Comparative, International, and Developmental Education
>
> This focus is available for students who wish to engage in a systematic study of comparative, international, and development education. The common core is an interest in carefully studying learning, in whatever form, as it occurs in a variety of national and cultural settings, in order to better understand its sociocultural, economic, and political roles in a particular society.

Developing Human Resources (DHR)

The Developing Human Resources specialization is designed to examine learning concepts in organization development, consultation, planned change, community development, staff development, management, and leadership training.'

In a list of 'faculty interests' reflecting the expertise available the concerns of these areas are well covered and also, for instance, planning, evaluation, computer applications, decision-making structures, self-directed learning, access to media, women's studies, ethnicity and language, economic, political and legal issues associated with adult education, peace studies as well as research design including qualitative research. A study of the OISE course offer shows that these subject areas are, in fact, covered. So are, not unexpectedly, major philosophical, historical and conceptual bases 'designed to assist students to develop an understanding of and an identity with the field of adult education in Canada' (Course 1100 F, S, H - Outline of adult education).

The University of British Columbia in Canada, which has a long tradition of degree studies in adult education (the first degrees awarded as early as 1957) lists for its M.A. programme the following 'requested courses' and 'restricted electives':

Required Courses:
--Foundations of Adult Education
--Adult Education Program Planning Theory
--Theory and Research on Adult Learning
--M.A. Seminar
--Research Methods
  Introduction to Research in Education
  Introduction to Statistics for Research in Education (or approved alternatives)
  Master's Thesis
Restricted Electives:
--Adult Education and Society
--History of Canadian Adult Education
--International Dimension of Adult Education

(UBC 1984, p.3)

The general outline of these European and Canadian programmes does not differ much from what can be deduced from lists of

content describing corresponding programmes applied in developing countries. An example is the University of Ghana Diploma in Adult Education:

1 Principles of adult education
2 Psychology of adulthood
3 Theory and practice of organisation
4 Theory of education and the use of the mass media
5 Community development / Literacy
6 Comparative adult education
7 Principles and methods of functional literacy

(AAEA Newsletter 2, 2 (1979), p. 6)

The same may be said about the University of Nairobi foundation course in adult education, which comprises

1. Methods of teaching adults
2. Effective evaluation for adult educators
3. Curriculum development, planning and administration
4. Policy and philosophy of adult education
5. Human relations and communication
6. Psychology of adult learning
7. Adult education and development
8. Introduction to Kiswahili

The objectives listed for this course contributes further information:

> The course will give you new knowledge and skills so that at the end of the course you will be able to:
>
> 1. explain the role of literacy in the development of Kenya;
> 2. select the most appropriate methods of teaching adults;
> 3. counsel and guide adult learners;
> 4. recruit adult students and encourage them to continue learning;
> 5. assess the needs of the community around your centre;
> 6. apply the knowledge you have learnt to improve your leadership skills especially in leading community projects;
> 7. interpret the curriculum to meet the needs of the local community.
>
> (Student handbook p. 2)

A somewhat different approach characterises the training of adult educators in Tanzania, however:

> The main subject areas included in our courses on adult education are
>
> (i) Literacy and functional literacy programmes
>
> (ii) Correspondence studies
>
> ...
>
> (iii) Post literacy programmes
>
> (iv) Folk development colleges - offering village oriented courses
>
> (v) Vocational training
>
> (vi) Workers education - employees programmes mainly meant for raising political consciousness in order to enable them to participate actively in management
>
> (vii) Evening classes programmes
>
> (viii) Extension services programmes
>
> (ix) Mass campaigns
>
> (x) Health education programmes, e.g. Mother and child health programme
>
> (private communication from Mrs. A. Muro of the Tanzanian Institute of Adult Education)

The examples chosen, although limited to Europe, North America and Africa, are probably reasonably representative of what university study programmes on adult education are like. The language course (Kiswahili) included in the Kenyan programme is an exceptional part, however, whereas, for instance, health education and 'village-oriented' learning as parts of the Tanzanian programme simply represent topical concerns. Such certainly occur in the developed countries as well. Thus the University of Amsterdam includes a study of the feminist movement in an adult-education degree programme.

Plans and reality compared

When the principles advocated by adult-education leaders on the one hand and reality as reflected in research and existing degree programmes on the other hand are compared, the similarities are evidently predominant. Specifications like statistics,

evening classes, correspondence courses clearly belong to the more comprehensive categories research methods, organisation and teaching/learning methods and media. The references to educational technology and evaluation can be related to research on adult education and the systems approach commonly applied to educational investigations. There are mainly differences of degree, i.e. of how detailed plans and curricula are.

There is one evident basic difference, however, between wishes expressed and existing curricula, and this concerns the affective study objectives. It is far from strange that this should be the case. Affective objectives are rarely stressed in university curricula - they could with good reason be regarded with suspicion as prescriptions for indoctrination. There is no reason to regret that university curricula, while tacitly accepting them, should do without the 'beliefs' unblushingly propagated by the participants in the Chamberlain study. However, the Canadian curriculum claims to assisting students to develop an understanding of and an identity with adult education are not far off although based in the cognitive domain.

There is also implicitly something of a special ethos of adult education behind the Dutch 'andragology' with reference to individuals and groups, the British 'fundamental issues' and the German 'theory of adult education'. As I have developed elsewhere (Holmberg 1984) adult education is in its ethos and intentions more or less strongly attached to ideals of student independence and the conviction that life-long learning is a realistic proposition.

Thus on the whole, the academic discipline of adult education as occurring in reality seems to agree remarkably well with the desired picture of the discipline as described above.

Further delineations

Some references have been made above to occupational training. Many adult educators would undoubtedly prefer to exclude

this type of learning from the adult-education concept in favour of pure liberal-arts study. This was the thinking behind the contributions of both Albert Mansridge and Eduard Lindeman, the great British and American pioneers in adult education (Mansbridge 1919 p. 7, Stubblefield 1979 p. 186; cf. Omolewa 1984). This exclusion is no longer possible, however. Both what is offered by adult-education agencies and existing university curricula (and other types of training) for adult-education work include occupational subjects. This is particularly important in upgrading, retraining and other types of recurrent education. In his ten 'universal' concerns of adult learners Charles Wedemeyer, the American humanist educator, includes three related to occupational learning, i.e. concern with earning a living, concern with reaching one's potential and concern with being secure (Wedemeyer 1981 p. 187), which support the claim of occupational training to belong to general adult education.

Another delineation issue concerns distance education. The term distance education covers the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organisation. This definition of mine has been widely accepted (cf. Keegan 1980a and b). Distance study denotes the activity of the students, distance teaching that of the tutorial organisation, particularly its authors and tutors. Distance study can thus be described as learning supported by

> 'those teaching methods in which because of the physical separateness of learners and teachers, the interactive, as well as the preactive phase of teaching, is conducted through print, mechanical, or electronic devices'.
>
> (Moore 1975 p. 5)

Undoubtedly distance education mainly serves the educational endeavours of adults (cf. Holmberg 1981), but it is not the age or maturity of the students that generally characterises

distance education. What primarily characterises it is that communication between learner and teacher occurs by means of media (the written word, audio recordings, telephone etc.). Further, distance education is, to a far from small degree, applied to the education of children and youngsters, for instance by means of supervised correspondence study (Childs 1963, Weissbrot 1969, Holmberg 1973, Furck & Schwänke 1984). The concepts of adult and distance education overlap, but do not cover each other. On distance education as an academic discipline see Holmberg 1983 and Sparkes 1983.

Conclusion

Adult education is the designation of any educational activitiy with which earlier educational activities are continued, thus including literacy programmes and similar work in developing parts of the world with adults who have had no formal schooling, but have profited from other types of education.

Adult education as almost universally understood today is concerned with liberal arts, languages, science, technology and occupational subjects. Various methods and media are applied to adult education, among them primarily those of group learning and distance education.

The activities thus outlined are being investigated at many universities within the framework of the academic discipline of adult education. Studies of the concerns of adult education have caused a discussion about the desired contents of and also the development of training programmes for adult educators. University curricula for adult education, including post-graduate study, are a far from uncommon occurrence.

The discipline of adult education relies heavily on adjacent disciplines like other areas of educational research, psychology, sociology and administration. Its

own core is

adult learning,
the target groups of adult education including
the life conditions of adult students,
analysis of educational and training needs,
counselling,
curricular studies, and
methodology.

This description summarises common practice in the early 1980s as well as the wishes and plans articulated before the discipline of adult education had been administratively established.

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